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Washburn: Hopi Kachina: Spirit of Life

Dorothy K. Washburn, ed. *Hopi Kachina: Spirit of Life*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1980. 158 pp., 16 illustrations. \$14.95 (paper).

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This volume, which claims as its integrating theme the role of the kachina in the Hopi world, is intended to operate on different levels. On one level it is a collection of introductory articles about the Hopi, written by experts, on topics ranging from social order to material culture. On another, it is a catalog published to accompany an exhibit produced by the Science Museum of the California Academy of Sciences. Unfortunately, the two levels are not made explicit, and the underlying purpose of the book is often lost as one reads the separate articles. The exhibit itself arose from Nathaniel Owings's gift of his collection of kachina dolls to the California Academy of Sciences, and this volume contains photographs of the dolls which made up the main part of the traveling exhibit. However, there is some confusion as to whether the book was meant solely to accompany the exhibit or to stand alone as a treatise on Hopi kachinas in its own right. Although the book has the same title as the exhibit, this is somewhat misleading, since the articles included in the book give a general introduction to Hopi culture but do not focus specifically on kachinas.

Both the exhibit and the book were produced in collaboration with Hopi consultants. The prologue to the book is written by one such consultant, Emory Sekaquaptewa, who suggests that the purpose of the exhibit is "to bring the Hopi world to the outside onlooker" (p. 7). This prologue is followed by an introduction written by the editor of the book, Dorothy Washburn, who repeats that the purpose of the exhibit is to open a window onto the Hopi world (p. 8). One assumes, quite validly, that this is also the purpose of the book, but, once again, there is confusion, for the prologue and introduction describe the purpose and plan of the exhibit, not of the book.

Although the catalog of the exhibit is included in the book, this catalog was intended to supplement the exhibit; thus the reader of the book is given only one dimension of the picture which the catalog and exhibit together would present. For this reason the catalog strikes the reader as incomplete, although perhaps the necessary complementary information was provided by the exhibit. Washburn states that at the suggestion of the Hopi consultants the exhibit focuses upon the kachinas, "supernatural messengers who mediate between the harsh realities of Arizona's environmental limitations and the daily needs of the Hopi people"

(p. 8). Various aspects of the exhibit are then discussed, including an audiovisual introduction to the physical environment of the Hopi, a collection of artifacts that are described as juxtaposed against photographs and paintings portraying the activity of Hopi daily life as well as the complex relationship of spiritual and secular life, and, finally, as the conclusion to the exhibit, an audiovisual commentary by the Hopi people themselves "about their present life and future hopes" (p. 8).

It is stressed that the exhibit is meant to be "comfortable" for the Hopi as well as informative for the American public. Certainly Hopi involvement with the production of the exhibit and catalog is apparent and, indeed, essential in an undertaking which challenges us to "reset our thinking about another culture" (p. 9). It is perhaps for this reason that Hopi words, differentiated from English by italics, are used frequently in the text and are accompanied by a key to their correct pronunciation in the Hopi language. This linguistic information is supplemented by the Hopi alphabet, again with a key to pronunciation, provided by Emory Sekaquaptewa.

Following the introduction are seven excellent articles which provide supplementary information on various aspects of Hopi life. Accompanying these articles is a series of documentary photographs, the high point of the book's "visual representation of Hopi life." In the wide margins of the text are relevant quotations from books by and about Hopis which complement the text and photographs.

The first article, "The Prehistoric and Historic Occupation of the Hopi Mesas" by E. Charles Adams and Deborah Hull, is a nicely synthesized chronological treatment of subject matter which "is as yet incompletely understood" (p. 11). Included are a brief introduction to archeological investigations at Hopi; a discussion of change in artistic expression (especially for ceramics) as a reflection of change in world view; an evaluation of archeological evidence which traces influence from neighboring Native American groups, particularly on forms of material culture and ceremonial life; and a conclusion which briefly details culture change and continuity in Hopi life.

Watson Smith's article, "Mural Decorations from Ancient Hopi Kivas," is a particularly enlightening description of the process of conservation of mural paintings. Since such paintings were covered over with plaster at the conclusion of a particular ceremonial so that the wall could be newly painted for the next ceremony, the archeologist is confronted with the delicate task of uncovering the paintings layer by layer. Especially significant is Smith's location of this material within its cultural context as he interprets several of these murals in light of modern Hopi ceremonies.

In "Kachina: Window to the Hopi World," Dorothy Washburn recounts the Hopi origin myth (the one given

"according to most accounts") and then discusses the ways in which, in symbolic terms, every ceremonial is a reenactment of this origin myth. In exploring the symbolism of the ceremonial costumes, Washburn concludes that the kachinas "literally wear their world" (p. 41). She gives an informative overview of the ceremonial cycle of kachina dances, emphasizing the uniquely Hopi "asymmetric relationship between the celebration of an event and the actual occurrence of an event" (p. 43). The article is concluded by a brief discussion of secular aspects of Hopi life and a statement that underscores the central theme of this book and the exhibit—that "the Hopi continue to rely ultimately not on modern technology, but on the power of the kachina" (p. 49).

"Hopi Social Organization" by John Connelly begins with a view of the "Hopi way" as one of balance and harmony with the physical environment. It is suggested that the "persistent now" of Hopi language and world view and the extreme importance of individual responsibility within the community are components of this harmony. Connelly continues with a discussion of Hopi place names, giving their English translations and aptly pointing out that the Hopi occupied places of residency and acquired farmlands "in return for commitments of responsibility" (p. 52). The article's subsections—"communities and community clusters," "clans and phratries," "households and lineages," "societies," and "tribal council"—provide a sketch of Hopi social and ceremonial organization, emphasizing in particular the complementary processes of separation and integration as strategies for maintaining harmony in a harsh environment (p. 63).

Clara Lee Tanner and John F. Tanner discuss "Contemporary Hopi Crafts: Basketry, Textiles, Pottery, Kachinas" within a historical framework, including a description of change in form and style through time. For each of the above-mentioned items of material culture the authors discuss basic form, function, technique of construction, and use of design and color. Of special interest is a brief mention of what constitutes a good basket in the eyes of the Hopi. The emphasis of the article is on process: how things are made and used and who makes them. The latter is particularly important because the production of certain items is restricted by male and female roles. The impact of acculturation on traditional crafts is also discussed.

The final article, "Modern Hopi Painting" by J. J. Brody, is a discussion of the development of painting, from its limited use on kiva walls, altars, and domestic artifacts prior to 1900 to its modern role as "painting for its own sake" (p. 87) which developed only with radical changes in the entire Hopi way of life. Brody includes a treatment of changes in style and form in modern painting and delineates ways in which economic factors and acculturation contribute to such change. The work of several individual Hopi artists is described in some detail and photographs of their work are included.

Following the articles is a series of vivid color photographs of kachina dolls and also of several modern paintings of kachinas. A brief identification is included with each photograph. The accompanying "Catalogue of the Exhibition" is made up of black-and-white photographs of kachina dolls, rattles, jewelry, dance sashes, moccasins, pottery, kiva murals, baskets, and a bridal costume. Included for each photograph is an identification of the artifact, a description of the materials used in its construction, its height in centimeters, and the name of the loaning museum. The artifacts are arranged within the following categories (subdivisions of the catalog): kachinas, kiva murals, Soyoko, Powamu, gifts, farming, clowns, spring and summer kachina dances, Niman, and Hopi bridal costume. Despite this arrangement, the items in the catalog appear as artifacts out of context; of note is the lack of any description here of the ceremonies in which particular kachinas appear or any discussion of specific roles of certain kachinas. Such information is available in the anthropological literature about the Hopi and may even have been included in the exhibit; however, its absence from the catalog is surprising. The volume concludes with a listing of the Hopi alphabet, key to pronunciation, small glossary, and a fairly substantial bibliography.

In summary, this book is commendable for its interdisciplinary articles and documentary photographs which provide a mosaic of approaches to the book's central focus, an introduction to the Hopi world. Some of the material included in the book provides supplementary information for the exhibit but takes on a somewhat fractional aspect when it stands alone. The publication of such a book in 1980 is significant, for this is the year of the Pueblo Tri-Centennial, commemorating the Pueblo Revolt of 1680—a stand for freedom from Spanish domination.